



Ecology news: Public workshops focus on possible changes to state's fish consumption rates
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Washington Department of Ecology news
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Public workshops focus on possible changes to state's fish consumption rates

OLYMPIA – The Department of Ecology (Ecology) will hold public workshops on possible changes to the state's fish consumption rates in May in Ellensburg, Tacoma and Spokane Valley.

The sessions are part of Ecology's efforts to share information with the public and to involve all parties interested in the agency's work to update regulatory standards for in-water environmental cleanup and water pollution discharges. Ecology also proposes to amend existing regulatory tools to help entities work effectively toward meeting permit limits and toward controlling sources of pollutants.

Part of this effort includes updating the state's fish consumption rates, which help guide regulatory standards about how clean Washington's waters and sediments must be.

Washington's marine and fresh waters are home to rich stocks of fish and shellfish. Protecting the health of these resources is important for the well-being of the state's environment, economy and people. Fish and shellfish are important parts of a healthy diet.

The workshops – part of a continuing public dialogue – will focus on fish consumption rates and how they connect with sediment cleanup decisions under the state's Sediment Management Standards. Here's the workshop schedule:

- May 7 in Ellensburg – 8:30 a.m. to noon, Central Washington University, Student Union Ballroom. Directions: <http://www.cwu.edu/~schedule/cms/index.php?page=contact-us>
- May 8 in Tacoma – 8:30 a.m. to noon, University of Washington's Tacoma Campus, Keystone Building (Carwein Auditorium). Directions: <http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/campus-map>
- May 15 in Spokane Valley – 1 to 4:30 p.m., CenterPlace Regional Event Center. Directions: <http://www.centerplacespokanevalley.com/contact.html>

Washington has made significant progress to reduce toxic chemicals. It has dramatically reduced mercury pollution, and is phasing out persistent chemicals that build up in the food chain, such as flame retardants. Washington has taken steps to reduce and phase out the use of copper brake pads, lead wheel weights, copper boat paints and chemicals in children's products.

Since toxic chemicals are also found in fish and shellfish, Ecology is continuing to work on this problem by developing a more accurate view of how much fish and shellfish Washington residents eat.

Washington currently uses two rates: 6.5 grams per day incorporated into water quality standards, and 54 grams per day, which is the Model Toxics Control Act default value used in setting sediment and water cleanup standards. The current rates were developed in the 1980s and 1990s.

The best current science now indicates that the present fish consumption rates do not accurately reflect how much of the state's fish and shellfish Washingtonians actually eat. Some people consume a lot more fish and shellfish than the state's current rates reflect.

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Ecology's fish consumption rates webpage: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/toxics/fish.html>

Ecology's website: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov>

Ecology's social media: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/about/newmedia.html>